

The Role of Islam in the Abolition of Slavery and in the Development of British Capitalism

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Abstract

West Indian scholars have overlooked the role played by the Muslim leadership in West Africa in bringing an end to the transatlantic trade in Africans. The *jihād* movements in West Africa in the late eighteenth century gave political unity to West Africa challenging the collaboration of European trade in Africans with the pagan slave traders. West Indian historiography, while emphasizing European abolitionist movements, ignores the Islamic unity (*tawhīd*) of humankind, which brought together many ethnically heterogeneous enslaved African Muslims to successfully challenge the West Indian plantation system. The exploitation of the human resources and the immense wealth of the then Moghul India and Imperial China by British colonialism helped develop the British industrial capitalism, which controlled most of the world until the end of World War II. The security of the British industrial capitalist complex could no longer depend on the small-scale West Indian plantation economies but on the large-scale economies of Asia protected by the British imperial forces under the British imperial flag.

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Introduction

Scholarly debates over the abolition of the slave trade in 1807 and the final demise of the abominable slave institution in the British West Indies in 1838 have been usually carried out in the context of the abolition movements in Britain and in Europe and in the context of an expanding industrialized British economy together with that of Europe. Traditional West Indian scholarship has deliberated over the influence of humanitarianism and constitutionalism upon the champions of abolition (most of whom were either the initiators or the perpetrators of the pernicious slave system) as political or ecclesiastical leaders. Meanwhile the growing power and role of Islam in uniting a politically fragmented and ethnically heterogeneous West Africa in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as a united front against the enslavement of Africans has been largely overlooked by traditional West Indian historians. Recent scholarship on West Africa and the transatlantic trade reveal the different strategies adopted by the people of west central Africa to protect and defend themselves and to effectively challenge the military invincibility of the European slave traders.¹ However, the prejudice of these scholars in blaming Islam and Muslim leadership as the slaving agent is quite clear.

Likewise, the wealth of Moghul India and Imperial China in terms of human and natural resources in sustaining and contributing to an ever growing capitalistic, industrialized British society has not been adequately studied. While analyses of the role of Islam in West Africa will debunk the established myth that Muslims were the perpetrators and collaborators of the transatlantic trade in Africans, research on the importance of the wealth of Moghul India and Imperial China to British industrialization will reveal the extent of the exploitation of the two Asian empires by the British imperial power, which consequently held the world monopoly on colonialism and free trade from the nineteenth century to the end of World War II. Twentieth-century British imperial colonialism was maintained by the British Imperial Navy fueled by the natural gas and oil wealth of the Middle East, then controlled by companies such as the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company.

In this article, I attempt to establish the role played by the Muslim leadership in West Africa – after the *jihāds* of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries – in bringing an end to the transatlantic trade in Africans. I also underscore the importance of Islam in uniting the ethnically heterogeneous enslaved African Muslims to successfully challenge the West Indian plantation system. I will also attempt to examine the importance of the wealth of Moghul India in the development of British commercial industrial capitalism.

***Jihād* in West Africa**

The *jihāds* of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries in West Africa – with its centers in Masina, Futa Jalon, Futa Toro and Sokoto – seem to have effectively challenged the European slave trade in West Africa. Until then, West Africa represented a region of political fragmentation and violence caused by constant conflicts and wars among a multitude of chiefdoms and petty kingdoms. Consequently, with a large-scale European demand for enslaved Africans, the inhabitants of the communities without strong centralized states and in a state of lawlessness became an easy prey to the slave trade. Such communities turned to local rural Muslim leadership constituted of clerics for protection against the slave raiding carried out by the Europeans with assistance from pagan warlords powered with foreign firearms. Therefore, *jihāds* carried out by Muslim clerical leadership were responses to local demand for protection against the slave raiders. With victories, local Muslim leadership assumed the role of leading national coalitions in West Africa.² The direct consequence of the *jihāds* was the emergence of strong centralized states in West Africa, backed by powerful military organizations. It was the political and military leadership of the West African Muslims that played a historical role to bring an end to the slave trade from the continent of Africa. As Joseph E. Inikori states: “for as long as their politico-military organizations remained strong and centralized authority remained firmly in control, the subjects were protected from capture and export.”³

These *jihāds* initially led by Muslim scholars and teachers, itinerant preachers and their student followers, and the religious leaders of trading and agricultural communities, were aimed at ridding the societies of corrupt local rulers whether non-Muslims or Muslims. Most of these *jihāds* had been achieved through a series of local non-Muslim peasant uprisings against the tyranny of local political and military elites. The *marabouts* (Muslim clerics) organized themselves against the tyranny of *ceddo* (a corps of warriors who assisted the slave traders). People victimized by various kinds of exactions and slave raids settled in the village refuges founded by the *marabouts*. Initially, the *jihāds* began as social revolutions in dispersed places in the Senegambia region to establish respect of Islamic precepts and to face the increasing threat from the slave trade organized by the Europeans.⁴ But gradually the *jihāds* influenced each other, and small colonies and communities of Muslims were united, culminating in a region-wide struggle to establish Muslim states. Within these Muslim states, many non-Muslim populations embraced Islam and both the rulers and the ruled came under Muslim law and collectively challenged the European slave trade.

The Futa Jallon *jihād* was the work of the settled Muslim communities allied with Fulani pastoralists. The Jalonke landlords who constituted the political elites oppressed both Muslim settlers and the pastoralists with heavy taxation on their growing trade in cattle and hide. As early as 1726 when Ibrahim Musa, known as Karamoko Alfa, proclaimed the holy war with the support of Muslims and non-Muslims – Islam became the banner of their solidarity and their resistance against the non-Muslim ruling elites.⁵ The Muslims finally prevailed when Ibrahim Sori (1776–1793) became the leader (*almami* / *imām*). The new state of Futa Jallon instituted consensual leadership, whereby the ruler was elected by a council constituted of members from the different provinces. Councils of elders led by local chiefs governed the families. Islamic leadership at the center and the *misidi* (family hamlets) at the local level together protected the people from being enslaved either by a fellow African or a European slave trader. Much of the pastoralist population found employment in the agricultural plantations. Futa Jallon with its tradition of Muslim learning and Islamic law and sedentary life style had no room for slavery or slave trade. In short, the Islamic state apparatus became responsible for the security of its people and the Islamic faith of the people ensured their freedom from enslavement. Futa Jallon finally succumbed to French military colonization in 1896.

Futa Toro, in the Senegal River valley, was the center of another *jihād* – and with a Senegambian and Guinean network of Muslim teachers in conjunction with local non-Muslim peasants – carried out by Muslim religious leaders (Sulayman Bal and Abd al-Qadir Kane) against the local military elites in protest at fiscal oppression and their collaboration with European slave traders. Under the *Almami* Abd al-Qadir Kane, the Islamic state of Futa Toro resorted to redemption, a strategy adopted mostly by the Muslims to free the enslaved people from the European and local slave traders.⁶ This is in line with Islamic tradition, which calls for the state to finance the freedom of the enslaved people. Prophet Muḥammad (ṢAAS) set the procedure for the freedom of war captives through state funding and personal wealth.⁷ Hazrat Abu Bakr As-Siddiq (RA), a companion and father-in-law of the Prophet Muḥammad and, subsequently, the first caliph during the Caliphate, exemplifies the redemption of enslaved people. In an effort to bring an end to the enslavement of Africans, Almami Kane also closed the French and British trade passages through the territory of Futa Toro.

Al-Hajj Umar (1794–1864), born in Futa Toro became a great nineteenth-century leader of West African *jihāds*. His *jihād* was not only against non-Muslim locals but also against lapsed Muslims and European intruders.⁸ His appeal in Futa Toro was enormous – embodying people of mixed

ethnic background, who found new social identity under the aegis of Islam. Western historians who have highlighted Umar's stress on the importance of strict obedience to Muslim practice have also stated contradictory historical accounts of enslavement, warfare, and the accumulation of booty in the state of Futa Toro.⁹ Such historical construction of the barbarity of the Muslims in West Africa has eased Western historians' justification of the European domination of the natives. This categorization of Muslims as barbaric has armed Western scholars with an ideological weapon to suppress the goodness of the Islamic heritage in West Africa. In 1893, Umar's state was absorbed into a growing French West African empire.

Uthman Dan Fodio (1754–1817) of Hausaland was the greatest of these West African Muslim leaders, who denounced the corrupt and un-Islamic practices of West African Muslim states. According to Basil Davidson "some of the origins of this Fulani rising, and in Hausaland, had lain in revolt against social inequalities".¹⁰ Dan Fodio upheld the concepts of *mujaddid* (a person who appears at the turn of every century of the Islamic calendar to revive Islam), the *hijra* (the migration to a true Muslim community), the role of the 'ulamā' (leaders of the Islamic society) in teaching the true faith, and the role of reason and consensus in the derivation of Muslim law. Dan Fodio's appeal to justice and morality rallied Fulani pastoral population, Hausa peasants, itinerant preachers and others in the formation of a Muslim state engulfing most of what is now northern Nigeria and the northern Cameroons. The Caliphate of Sokoto, established by Dan Fodio's son, Muhammad Bello, after the *jihād* of 1804–1812, was a combination of an Islamic state and a modified Hausa monarchy. The Sokoto regime created an agricultural and industrial base – producing cotton, indigo, grain, rice, tobacco, kola nuts, and other crops. The state promoted indigo and textile industries. The development of new industries such as peanut, oil and soap also favored the economic and political power of Muslim peasants against the slave military elites who collaborated with the slave traders in the greater Senegambia. The direct appeal made by Dan Fodio to the enslaved to join the *jihād* against the slave regimes guaranteed them state support against the forces of enslavement. Samory Rashid is of the opinion that Dan Fodio's *jihād* "may have been the first movement of its kind to introduce Islamic ideology to the phenomenon of slave resistance."¹¹ The Fulani pastoralists were settled and converted to sheep and goat raising as part of an effort to bring them under the rule of Muslim law. It has been argued that the *jihād* movement initiated by Dan Fodio found Islam in central Sudan "corrupt and persecuted" and left it "purified and supreme."¹² They found the Fulani landless and insecure, and they left them a ruling ar-

istocracy.¹³ In short, the sophisticated Islamic tradition of religious reform of Sokoto Caliphate prompted a creative literary and religious effort, which united the heterogeneous people of varied ethnicity belonging to Hausa, Fulani, Nupe, Yorubaland, Soninke, and Wolof into one Islamic state.

The successful *jihād* of Uthman Dan Fodio saw the spread of Islam into new regions such as Chad, southern Nigeria, Upper Volta, the Ivory Coast, and Guinea. Throughout West Africa, Islam had come to be almost the system of political leadership and moral reform. The *jihāds* of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in West Africa created Islamic states, which sought to include the whole population rather than a limited aristocracy, and to create a political people out of smaller diverse racial, ethnic, and linguistics backgrounds. The unity of Islam changed the political map of West Africa and posed a direct challenge to the transatlantic trade in Africans. The formation of Islamic states brought an end to the destructive wars of interstate rivalry. Consequently, there was a sharp drop in the slave trade because of the lack of war captives. In addition, Muslim rulers gained increasing local loyalties through their policy of the incorporation of former male captives into their armies rather than selling them as slaves.¹⁴ The army, which was constituted of freed war captives, became the essential state institution and the greatest impediment to the enslavement of Africans by the European slave traders in West Africa in the nineteenth century. Consequently, Muslim influence increased further owing to the suppression of the slave trade. Islam began and remained as the “liberating force” and did not end up “rationalizing slaving military activity,” as opined by Martin A. Klein. The armies of the West African Muslim states were composed of freed war captives who became the first defense of the states – and then, to carry out raids into the dens of the slave traders to free the enslaved Africans, whether Muslims or non-Muslims. The views held by Western historians that the armies were composed of enslaved people and that Muslim leadership rationalized the slaving military activity contradict the very nature of the *jihāds*, which were responses to free the enslaved and to provide security to the oppressed who sought refuge within Muslim enclaves called “the village of free people,” “here we speak of peace,” or “place of abundance.”¹⁵

The creation of a massive sedentary society – with the integration of pastoralists, peasants, and traders into a larger economy governed by Islamic laws and protected by a conscripted state army – made West Africans less prone to kidnapping and enslavement by the European slave traders. With Islam literacy spread among the local populace, there was also a wider understanding of the intricacies of the European slave traders and their collaboration with non-Muslim African rulers.

In the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the civilizing impact of Islam in West Africa through the *jihāds* had been highlighted by the West Indian missionaries sent to Southern Nigeria under the Niger Mission to carry on the evangelization of Southern Nigeria. Reverend Harry Herbert Simpson, a member of the Niger Mission succinctly stated that the Hausa and Nupe-speaking people became the “improved tribes” once they came in contact with the Fulani (Muslims), descendents of the Semitic race and superior to them.”¹⁶ Simpson further states that because of the British advent into Southern Nigeria, the Igbo- and Ijo-speaking people remained untouched by the influences of the Fulani *jihādists*. In other words, it was the British advent into the region that “left the natives of the southern provinces a vastly inferior stamp of mankind to their advantaged brethren in the north.”¹⁷ Ironically, black West Indian missionaries were duped into propagating the myth that blackness symbolized inferiority and that it was the duty of the European colonizing missionaries or the ‘white man’s burden’ to civilize the uncivilized blacks. This became the justification for “imperialism of righteousness”. The process of civilizing the blacks became a two-fold program – one on the plantations in the New World and the other in the continent of Africa.

Edward Blyden, the West Indian missionary and historian, succinctly summed up the role of Islam as a defensive force against slave traders:

The introduction of Islam into Central and West Africa has been the most important if not the sole preservative against the desolations of the slave-trade. Mohammedanism [Islam] furnished a protection to the tribes who embraced it by effectively binding them together in one strong religious fraternity, and enabling them by their united effort to battle the attempts of powerful ‘pagan’ slave hunters.¹⁸

Such a summation from a Christian missionary dismisses, firstly, the common Western allegation of the spread of Islam in Central and West Africa through coercion and force, and secondly, that the Atlantic slave traders depended on Muslim wholesalers. Edward Blyden’s statement authenticates that the Africans who assisted the European slave traders were “pagans” and certainly not Muslims. Furthermore, the slave-trading houses were also along the pagan coastal belt of West Africa, known as the “Slave Coast.” Goree Island off the coast of Senegal, captured by the European slave traders with military prowess, also was a storage center for the African captives from Senegal and other parts of West Africa before they were shipped to the New World. Muslims from the Senegam-

bia region became one of the worst victims in the Atlantic trade in Africans.¹⁹ Although West Indian historians have accused Muslims of their involvement in the slave trade, their scholarship fails to adequately document the participation of the West African Muslim leadership or the West African Muslim Trading House with the transatlantic trade in Africans. Scholars in West Indian history have further failed to examine the role played by the West African Muslim rulers in bringing an end to the slave trade. In short, the Muslim states formed through *jihād* stood as a challenge to the marauding Europeans until the end of the nineteenth century. Subsequently, with unprecedented military power, all the Muslim states of West Africa were absorbed into European colonial empires and remained as European subjects until post-World War II. Islam and Muslims gave West Africa political and cultural unity. Muslims in West Africa, like the Moors in Andalusia and the Moghuls in India, represent the bearers of civilization of cultural enlightenment and material progress – in sharp contrast to a history of European plunder and pillage of Africa.

The Qur'ānic command to wage *jihād*, or struggle against oppression, and reinforced by the traditions of Prophet Muḥammad was transplanted in the New World through the Muslim Maroons and the enslaved African Muslims. *Jihāds* took the practical form of marroonage, flight from bondage, leading to the establishment of Maroon communities and the outbreak of innumerable slave rebellions throughout the Americas. These Islamic practices and principles appeared in the New World plantation, apparently with the enslaved Africans many of whom may have received their experiences in the *jihāds* in West Africa.²⁰ *Jihād* which became the religious and political ideology of the Maroons and the enslaved Africans in the plantations in Jamaica forms the core of this presentation (Also in my forthcoming book, *Invisible yet Invincible: The Islamic Heritage of the Maroons and the Enslaved Africans in Jamaica*, Austin and Macauley Publishers, 2012).²¹ The inner *jihād* – that is, the personal struggle to be in the righteous path, regarded to be the greater *jihād* – finally gave way to the lesser *jihād* – that is, the rebellion against the enslavement system in defense of human dignity.

The Mythical Role of the European Abolitionists

West Indian historians have emphasized that the false goodness and the mythical humanitarian role of the European abolitionists to bring an end to the slave trade, was ironically carried out by their own European brethren. Almost all sectors of the British society – royalty, ecclesiastical leaders, high government officials, both military and civil, and leading middle-class humanitarians – shared the wealth of the transatlantic trade in Africans with merchants, shippers, and planters. The economic motivations

of these so-called abolitionists – many of whom, such as William Wilberforce, were members of the British parliament – culminated in the ruination of the once prosperous Moghul India, and the destruction of the Middle Kingdom - the Imperial China. The continent of Africa was not spared of the exploitation of its human and material wealth by the European abolitionists. They initiated the notorious “European Scramble for Africa” in the 1880s and 1890s – likened to “the Slicing of the Chinese Melon” by the European powers in the late nineteenth century and the dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire, beginning in the early twentieth century.²²

Economic inefficiency, international exigencies, and political necessities rather than humanitarianism or a sense of the immorality of slavery had led British Prime Minister William Pitt to urge his friend William Wilberforce to launch the campaign for the abolition of the slave trade in 1787. With the independence of the thirteen British North American colonies in 1783, the economic importance and security of the West Indian plantation system to the expanding British industrialized economy further declined. The British West Indies were restricted from having unlimited trade with the newly independent United States. By the Order-in-Council of July 2, 1783, the United States was excluded from colonial markets under the principles of Navigation Acts. The West Indian islands could not import the necessary foodstuffs such as salted beef, pork, fish, and dairy products and the lumber necessary for making hogsheads and barrels to ship their sugar and rum.²³ West Indian rum makers lost their main American consumers. The rum trade usually paid for all the local expenses of the West Indian plantations, including the purchase of slaves. Trade restrictions with the United States and the discriminatory duties imposed on West Indian products by some states of the United States reduced the profitability of the West Indian sugar economy.²⁴ In order to reduce dependence on food imports, diversification of food crops had been undertaken in the islands. The planters were forced to grow more provisions, but Jamaica and the other British West Indian islands were repeatedly faced with severe shortages of food. Under the new Atlantic commercial system, what the plantation system in the West Indies was producing for export increasingly proved to be of small-scale economies “geared to subsistence production.”²⁵

Different views have emerged regarding the impact of the American Revolution on the British mercantilist system. Andrew J. O’Shaughnessy is of the view that Eric Williams exaggerated the importance of American trade and that the American Revolution brought about crucial changes in the British imperial economy.²⁶ The restrictions on Ameri-

can trade imposed by the Navigation Acts had limited effect in preventing the trade between the newly independent United States and the West Indies. The American Revolution coincided with the rise of “free trade ideas and the beginnings of industrial capitalism”.²⁷

Traditional West Indian historians have stressed the role of abolitionists such as James Ramsay, Thomas Clarkson, William Fox, and William Wilberforce for the abolition of the slave trade in 1807 leading to the final emancipation of the enslaved in the British West Indies in 1838. The role of James Ramsay as a genuine abolitionist is questionable. James Ramsay had served the Anglican Church in the West Indies for twenty years, carrying out the injunctions of the Church of England to Christianize the enslaved population. Christianization is seen by many as nothing less than spiritual genocide of the enslaved population. Even, Thomas Clarkson, regarded to be a leading antislavery historian for his statement on the slave trade as “the most monstrous of evils,” cannot be considered a compassionate friend of the enslaved Africans. His writings on the enslaved people as “the wretched Africans . . . torn from their country in a state of nature . . .” reflects his true belief of the enslaved Africans as the miserable, squalid Africans living in a primitive state. With such a portrayal of the enslaved Africans, Clarkson perhaps was trying to gain the sympathy and support of the British for the abolition of the slave trade and thereby earn a position for himself in the abolitionist movement. Yet, that uncertain sentiment sends mixed messages about his true intentions.

Wilberforce, for his part, represented the British industrial interests and therefore, understandably, could not have been a supporter of the West Indian interest upon which the enslaved system depended. A natural corollary to the destruction of the power of the West Indian interest by the British Parliamentary members, who protected the industrial interest group, was the abolition of slavery. To the enslaved African Muslims, Wilberforce was simply another *bucra massa*, (the white master) with a fossilized soul who lacked human values and qualities.²⁸

British colonial history is rich in telling the victories and glories of their soldiers and statesmen. But upon closer scrutiny, many of the stories of heroism appear to be mere myth and legends or victories achieved through deceit, treachery, and the “divide and rule” of the colonized. While at the same time, the extraordinary feats of the colonized people, described as the “uncivilized brutes,” are labeled as works of obeah such as the heroism of Grandee Nanny – Sarah against the British Red Coats in Jamaica. To represent Wilberforce as a friend of the enslaved Africans and a great abolitionist is as fictitious as the role played by T. E. Lawrence, popularly

known as Lawrence of Arabia in liberating the Arabs from the Ottoman rule in 1916 during World War I. T. E. Lawrence, Welsh by birth was no Arab and his reputation was only an offshoot of the Arab Revolt, which defeated the Ottomans during the capture of Aqaba. He had no military role in the Arab Revolt. He was a cartographer and the role he played can be described in the twenty-first century as a “terrorist,” dynamiting the railroads in the Arabian Peninsula to paralyze the communication links of the Ottomans. Once again, the claim made by the British of Lawrence as the military leader in the capture of Aqaba, which paved the way for the subsequent British and French conquest of the Middle East has no historical authenticity. During World War I, the alliance between the Ottomans and Germany made it imperative to secure the Suez Canal, the lifeline to the British Indian Empire. Prior to the Arab Revolt in 1916 led by the sons of Emir Hussein of Makkah – Faisal, Abdullah, Sherif Ali, and Sherif Nasir – and Auda Abu Tayeh, the head of the Tawayha section of the Huwaitat confederation, two British expeditions undertaken by Sir Archibald Murray from Egypt to capture Aqaba had met with disastrous defeats.²⁹ The British duped the Arabs with false promises of independence and military assistance to raise an Arab revolt against the Ottomans. Sir Edmund Allenby, who replaced Sir Murray, arrived in Cairo towards the end of June 1916. The news of the fall of Aqaba on the sixth of July was the first news of military significance that had greeted the new commander-in-chief on his arrival. However, the Arabs had been robbed of their victory against the Ottoman forces by Sir Allenby, whose forces quickly took over Palestine while the Arab leader, Emir Faisal was engrossed in military and political preparation. The capture of Aqaba paved the way for the Anglo-French domination in the Middle East in post-World War I, through the League of Nations mandate system based on the secret Sykes-Picot Agreement of 1916. The agreement, which carved out the Asian-Arab portion of the Ottoman Empire between Britain and France, conflicted with the pledges made in 1915 by Sir Henry McMahon, the British High Commissioner in Cairo to the Arabs. The Sykes-Picot Agreement has been described as “not only the product of greed at its worst . . . : it also stands out as a startling piece of double-dealing.”³⁰

The role played by T. E. Lawrence in the Arab Revolt in 1916, is nothing short of a myth. It is the Arabs who took arms to defend their own land, and Lawrence was peripheral to the Arab Revolt. Writing on British deceitful and devious promises, Lawrence in his autobiography, *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* writes:

It was evident from the beginning that if we won the war, these promises to the Arab would be dead paper and had I been an honest adviser of

the Arabs I would have advised them to go home and not risk their lives fighting for such stuff. . . . I risked the fraud on my conviction, that Arab help was necessary to our cheap and speedy victory in the East, and that better we win and break our word than lose.³¹

No British forces took any part in the Arab Revolt, yet British treachery and military prowess enabled them to occupy the Middle East. When the League of Nations awarded the United Kingdom the Palestine mandate in 1922, it specifically charged Britain to implement the infamous Balfour Declaration – leading to the systematic destruction of Palestine and the creation of Israel, a Western colonial entity.

Similarly, the projection of Wilberforce as the leading abolitionist in the antislavery movement is a denial of the sacrifices made by the enslaved Africans to establish the dignity of the soul. Wilberforce's association with the abolitionist movement was closely allied to the interests of the industrial magnates who subsequently scourged the world. His support for the industrial magnates of Britain required him to destroy the West Indian plantation monopoly with its dependent institution of slavery. The abolition of slavery was by default rather than intentional or the objective of the British imperial authorities on moral grounds. In short, Wilberforce's role can be seen as destroying an evil institution out of necessity only to be replaced by another, whose tentacles reached almost every civilization to serve the ever growing greed of an industrialized Britain.

Resistance (*Jihād*) by the Enslaved African Muslims

The end of the British Atlantic trade in Africans did not bring an end to the untold miseries and sufferings of the enslaved Africans in the British West Indies. The cruel slave system continued with more repression and oppression to tame the existing enslaved Africans who would now be hard to be replaced. The enslaved Africans, led by their Muslim *marabouts* (clerics) and *imāms* (prayer leaders), continued their struggle in different forms from open rebellion to covert acts of resistance such as burning cane-fields, damaging plantation machineries or other symbols of slavery, and running away – until the evil system was crippled from within in the 1830s.

The sacrifices made by the enslaved African Muslims to establish the dignity of the soul are incalculable. Ironically, the increasing effort toward the Christianization of the enslaved population with the intended aim to bring Western civilizing effects upon them only strengthened the resolve of the enslaved African Muslims to maintain their faith and their value system even at the cost of their lives. Between the ending of the Napo-

leonic Wars in 1815 and 1832, a crescendo of slave rebellions occurred throughout the British West Indies. Although the creole (island-born) population constituted 80 per cent of the enslaved population, the rebellions were led by the slave elite – who were born in Africa and enjoyed respect from the others because of their positions on the estates based on their skills. Among the insurrections of the enslaved, the most important ones were: in Barbados in 1816; Demerara, in Guyana in 1823 and with its climax in Jamaica in 1831–1832. Although commonly known as a Baptist Rebellion, it was a *jihād* in response to a call made through a *wathīqa*, a pastoral letter urging the *Ummay-I-Islamiyah* (the followers of Islam) to rise against the oppressive slave system.³² Although the revolt lacked a centralized leadership, it assumed the dimension of an island-wide uprising and spread over an area of 750 square miles, involving about sixty thousand enslaved people from more than three hundred estates.

Though brutally repressed, the rebellion convinced the British Parliament that it would be prudent to bring an end to the system that was no longer viable in an industrial capitalistic era, which required sustained loyal workers who enjoyed a degree of consuming power. The aim of the *jihād* of 1831–1832 was to free the enslaved from bondage and make them wage earners. While freedom from bondage established the dignity of the soul of the enslaved African Muslims, the abolition of the slave system created a consuming population for the industrialized magnates in Britain who controlled the British Parliament. However, abolition of the slave system in the British West Indies and industrialization in England did not lead to the economic upliftment of the newly freed Africans but put them in perpetual economic poverty. Freedom from bondage required them to maintain themselves. With no land ownership, the long standing agricultural skills of the freed Africans went underused and wasted with a consequential plummeting of agriculture and food production. Neither did the former enslaved population have access to educational institutions nor vocational training to better their lives. Once again, the victims of the abominable slave system became easy prey to the evils of a capitalistic industrial system. Michael Craton succinctly concludes that the slave rebellions throughout the British West Indies were a “heroic, but heroic failure.”³³ He further adds: “Formal emancipation was little more than a hegemonic trick. New forms of slavery were instituted by importing Asiatic *coolies* or simply wage slavery.”³⁴ The West Indian plantocracy reformed, it joined ranks with the power of industrial capital, which replaced the landed aristocracy in the new British Parliament, so that they continued to rule for at least a hundred years after 1838.

The Moghul Islamic Wealth

Although Eric Williams states that “the rise and fall of mercantilism is the rise and fall of slavery,” British mercantilism and commercial imperialism expanded in Asia with the abolition of the slave institution in the West Indies. British West Indian plantation monopoly and British East India Company’s monopoly of the China trade came to an end in the 1830s. The nature of colonialism, capitalism, and mercantilism changed with the abolition of slavery. British monopoly of world commerce, mercantilism, capitalism, and colonialism assumed a grandiose scale. The age of laissez faire also saw the direct involvement of the British imperial government in upholding its national honor by protecting the interests of the British citizens in their quests for commercial mercantilism, capitalism, and acquisition of raw materials for British industries and markets for British manufactured goods. In short, with the abolition of monopoly charters to private British companies, the British imperial government replaced the companies’ role to maintain commercial and trade relations with foreign countries, often leading to the forceful opening of the latter to British establishment of political and diplomatic relations.

Colonies of small-scale economies of the British West Indies were replaced by colonial economies of outstanding prosperity such as Moghul India and Imperial China as they were essential to the development and survival of the British imperial-industrial complex. While India and the Chinese island of Hong Kong became British colonies, the entire Yangtze Valley, with the port of Shanghai, in Imperial China became a British sphere of interest containing some of the most exploitative institutions. As Eric Williams claims, British mercantilism in the post-slavery period was neither dead nor damned.³⁵ The period following the abolition of slavery, saw the accumulation of bullion by the British treasury for a sound economy, a favorable balance of trade worldwide, and the development of agricultural and industrial manufactures. These essentials of mercantilism were better secured directly by the British government, and its continuance required direct political and military control over geographic territories worldwide rather than being maintained by monopoly company holders who often lacked the military power to protect British citizens and their interests or who lacked diplomatic recognition.

Subsequent to the loss of the thirteen British North American colonies in 1783, following the American Revolution, it became important to locate exploitable treasures to keep the wheels of British industrialization in motion. The riches of Moghul India were opened to the Brit-

ish Treasury in 1757, when through the East India Company, Britain gained a foothold in the subcontinent unseating the legal nawab of Bengal, Sirajuddaulah,³⁶ through treacherous and devious policies. Britain turned to India aiming to turn the Indian economy into the classical colonial mould. The British exchequer was aware of the immense wealth of the East as the Oriental trade in silk, muslin, cotton, and piece-goods, dominated by the East India Company, which had brought in extraordinary gains to the nation as early as the late seventeenth century.

India, a predominantly Hindu nation, had come under Muslim rule from the early thirteenth century. Islam had made its first appearance in the subcontinent in 712 AC. Unlike the British Raj, the great Moghuls of India, beginning with Babur in 1526, enriched the country and have left their mark in the history of medieval India not only as conquerors but as builders of a great empire – of which present day India boasts of its proud heritage. The rule of the six great Moghul emperors ended in 1706 and gave way to the nominal reign of the weaker Moghuls, who were exploited by the East India Company when it became a territorial power in 1757. By 1760, Britain became the dominant power in India, though direct Crown rule was not imposed until 1858 following the Indian Sepoy Mutiny and the deposition of the last Moghul ruler, Bahadur Shah II.

India, under the Moghuls, was the home of cloth manufacture and the greatest and almost the sole supplier of the hundred varieties of her well-known cotton goods, precious stones, drugs, and other valuable products.³⁷ It was said “all the gold and silver of the universe found a thousand and one channels for entering into India, but there was not a single outlet for the precious metals to go out of the country.”³⁸ Evidently, the coins of the Moghul rulers of India were minted from New World silver.³⁹ European demands for goods from India saw the immense and constant inflow of gold and silver into the Indian Empire, which made the masses live in ease and comfort under the great rule of the Moghuls. Moghul India, best known for the Taj Mahal, one of the Seven Wonders of the World, had accomplished a high level of cultural achievement in the arts, literature, history, philosophy, poetry, science, and architecture.

The exploitation of India, initiated by the East India Company with the tacit approval of the British imperial government soon after the Battle of Plassey in 1757, set in motion the Industrial Revolution in England with a rapidity of changes that “probably nothing has ever equaled.”⁴⁰ Evidence further suggests that “probably between Plassey and Waterloo a sum of £1,000 million was transferred from Indian hoards to English banks.”⁴¹ In short, an average of £17.2 million per annum flowed into the British economy from

India. While the Muslim rulers of Bengal had collected £818,000 in land revenues between 1764 and 1765, the British authorities in India enjoyed land revenue of £3,235,259 in 1794 and 1795.⁴² In India, the scale of British exploitation is horrendous. Since Bengal was the richest province in Moghul India, it probably paid an unparalleled price: "In Bengal alone, up to 20 million people were slaughtered at the end of the 18th century."⁴³ In short, within a span of forty years, the British Raj had eliminated twenty million people by the use of brute force. The tragedy of India in terms of human loss and material wealth was, therefore, no different than that of West Africa.

The ruby that adorns the crown of Great Britain best exemplifies the British exploitation of the wealth of Moghul India. The British acquisition of the riches of Moghul India, known as the "jewel" within the British Empire, helped augment the abolition of the slave trade in 1807 and finally the abolition of the enslaved system in 1838.

With the acquisition of territorial power in India, the East India Company, with no investment cost, took control and directed the cultivation of sugar in 1787, in a bid to maintain its supremacy in the British sugar trade. In the same year, Wilberforce was encouraged by Prime Minister Pitt to sponsor the proposal for the abolition of the slave trade, on which the West Indian sugar monopoly was maintained. The first shipment of Indian sugar of 202 tons valued at £22,345 reached England in 1791.⁴⁴ Imports of Indian sugar increased to 11,041 tons, valued at £545, 937, in 1800. British sugar consumers paid less for Indian sugar than for West Indian sugar. Hence, the demand for the abolition of slave trade, on which the West Indian sugar plantations depended, was a compassion for the British consumers rather than for the Caribbean slaves. Wilberforce had at his heart the interest of the British people he represented as a member of the British Parliament. He regarded the enslaved Africans as "uncivilized" who "were particularly prone to rebel."⁴⁵ He stressed the civilizing of the slaves for the preservation of the prosperity and tranquility of the British West Indian colonies. Although Wilberforce urged the British Parliament to provide for the moral and religious instruction of the Negroes, his primary concern was the security and well-being of the British planter class and the promotion of the British industrial interest and not the upliftment of the enslaved Africans or the abolition of the slave trade and the emancipation of the enslaved.

At the core of the declining slave economy was the moral bankruptcy of the plantation masters rather than of the enslaved people who for the most part came from scholarly lineage that they displayed in their demeanor. Craton writes: "Absenteeism had become the rule for West Indian estates by the middle of the eighteenth century."⁴⁶ The most successful planters such as the Beckfords, the Hibberts, the Longs, the Gladstones, the Codringtons,

the Warners, the Pinneys, and the Marryats, returned to England once they collected their fortunes. "Thereafter," Craton suggests, "the plantations were in the hands of overseers and attorneys, the most mediocre members of the imperial middle class."⁴⁷ Referring to the few planters who remained in towns or in "Great Houses," Craton says, "at best, the politest society in the West Indies was a pale and philistine imitation of life in the metropolis."⁴⁸

By the early nineteenth century, British West Indian monopoly in sugar was "unsound in theory" and "unprofitable in practice" in the face of sufficient and cheap supply of sugar produced by free labor in India.⁴⁹ Sugar cost the British people annually more than one and a half million pounds sterling in the late 1820s.⁵⁰ Two-fifths of the price of every pound of sugar consumed in England represented the cost of production, two-fifths went in revenue to the government, and the West Indian planter received one-fifth in tribute.⁵¹ Evidently, the commercial plantation economy throughout the West Indies was mortally ill. The high rate of capital depreciation caused by Maroon wars, repeated slave rebellions on the estates accompanied by destruction of plantation infrastructure, and the maintenance cost of the enslaved population, imposed an unbearable burden on the gross revenue of the plantations in the West Indies. Jamaica, the largest of the British West Indies islands, had a frightful situation where debt, disease, and death were the only three topics of conversation. According to Eric Williams, "65 plantations had been abandoned, 32 were sold under decrees of the Court of Chancery to meet claims against them" between 1799 and 1807."⁵² In addition, in 1807, suits were pending against 115 others. The price of West Indian sugar was less than the cost of production in 1806, and the planter made no profit in 1807.

The decline in the economic value of the West Indies to the British economy, initiated by the independence of the United States of America, was furthered by Haitian independence on January 1, 1804 from France. The independence of Haiti brought an end to British attempts to acquire this large sugar-plantation economy based on slavery. The success of the enslaved Africans in Haiti to create the first Black nation in the Western Hemisphere caused trepidation and alarm throughout the plantation economy in the Americas of similar massive slave insurrections. In addition, the British West Indian slave economy showed signs of economic bankruptcy not only because sugar lost its importance with the competing Indian sugar and the introduction of beet sugar but also because of the expanding textile industries of Manchester and Lancashire.

The wealth of Moghul India also increasingly became important during the commercial warfare between Britain and France in the early nine-

teenth century, which seriously challenged not only the transatlantic trade in Africans but also the viability of the West Indian plantation system. Britain through Orders in Council was able to establish a naval blockade of north European ports to all trade and the closure of all coastal trade between European ports under French control. Napoleon, in retaliation, proclaimed the Continental System, whereby he declared a blockade of the British Isles and closed the European ports under his control to English goods. British slave ships sailing from West Africa to the Caribbean and to Liverpool were at high risks. The commercial warfare extended into the Caribbean, and American commercial interests, which initially flourished because of its neutral position, gradually got caught in a vise. Scores of American merchant vessels were captured by the British navy on grounds that they were trading illegally between enemy ports in the Caribbean normally closed to foreign trade.⁵³ Britain had established a virtual blockade of the key ports on the Atlantic coast and in the Gulf of Mexico. The British navy patrolled the coast of the United States to capture goods from American vessels and to reship them to European ports.

The British further infuriated Americans by their practice of impressment. Many British sailors attracted by the comparatively higher wages deserted their own vessels to join American crews. As a result, British ships were hard pressed for experienced sailors. Under British law the navy had the authority to stop any neutral vessel, take off all English subjects and impress them into service. Consequently, many American ships were stopped and searched for potential recruits. Between 1793 and 1811, the British captured about ten thousand native-born Americans – along with English, Swedes, Danes, and Portuguese sailors.⁵⁴ The practice of impressment indicated the dire need of adequate and experienced sailors for British ships at a time when Napoleon renewed hostilities with England, which lasted until 1815. Moreover, the slave trade “was in reality the grave of the sailors employed in it.”⁵⁵ According to Thomas Clarkson, the slave trade exacted an annual toll of two thousand British sailors. He said, “if, therefore, we have any regard to the lives of seamen, we ought to abandon a branch of trade which dissipates the men in so unprofitable a manner.”⁵⁶ Under such circumstances, it would seem that the abolition of the slave trade was more prudent to meet the wartime exigencies of the British navy in terms of experienced naval personnel upon which depended the security of the British isle and the British Empire from Napoleonic hegemony.

The abolition of the slave trade by Great Britain in 1807 also came at a time when the United States, in an effort to counter the British blockade of its seaboard, put an embargo on the export of American goods by sea or by land.⁵⁷ The stoppage of American foodstuffs and supplies caused

real distress in the West Indies.⁵⁸ The hard lessons from the American Revolution alerted the British imperial authorities of the implications of another war with America and its consequential impact on the enslaved population. Between 1780 and 1787, fifteen thousand slaves died of famine in Jamaica.⁵⁹ When the British Parliament took the decisive step to abolish the Atlantic slave trade in 1807, Wilberforce and his supporters voted in favor of the abolition of the transatlantic trade in Africans to ease the economic distress and insecurity of the British planter class. Wilberforce's role in Parliament over the abolition of the slave trade issue, leading to the final demise of the slave institution, has earned him the position as the indisputable abolitionist leader in West Indian historiography – leaving no room for the sacrifices made by the enslaved Africans on the plantations and the unquestionable part played by the African Muslims in West Africa to bring an end to the crime against humanity.

On the other hand, the abolition of the slave trade has elevated the image of the British government to higher moral grounds. The atrocities committed upon the enslaved Africans remain submerged under the pretentious “goodness” of those who created and perpetuated the brutal system. On the occasion of the bicentenary celebration of the demise of the pernicious trade, the achievements of Wilberforce as the leading abolitionist of the slave trade and slavery were celebrated with applause in the political and ecclesiastical halls in Great Britain, even after two hundred years of the abolition of the transatlantic trade in Africans. The image of the victims remains as the uncivilized, violent, idolatrous Africans influenced by evil spirits and devoid of the basic intellectual faculties to question the injustices and oppression inflicted upon them. The lack of written evidence on the part of the enslaved to authenticate their role in the emancipation of themselves has blinded the revelation of the truth in historical writing. Ironically, traditional West Indian history based on recorded documents of the planters, the colonial officials, and the ecclesiastical circles, echo the accolade of the British masters.

Moghul Indian Capital and British Industrialization

Admittedly, the labor of the enslaved Africans was the key to the development of the Americas and the wealth created initially by business in enslaved Africans and subsequently by African labor power was integrated into the manufacturing and industrial capitalism, leading to the emergence of an extra-European world market.⁶⁰ The capital accumulated within the world market was reinvested for the further development of industrial production. But the plantation economy based on the enslaved

population in the British West Indies was no longer expansive but restrictive and limited in nature to the expanding demands of an industrialized consumer economy of Great Britain by the late-eighteenth century. Plantation system had outgrown itself and was no longer viable in the machine age. Large-scale resources, capital, and market were essential for sustaining the continued growth of the British industrial capitalism and its world market. India with its accumulated capital and its wealth in terms of human and natural resources became the easy source of exploitation for the growth of the English imperial capitalistic economy. Scholars have suggested that “possibly since the world began, no investment has ever yielded the profit reaped from the Indian plunder, because for nearly fifty years Great Britain stood without a competitor.”⁶¹ With the consolidation of the East India Company rule, the flight of capital from India increased to a horrendous scale at the expense of the development of the native resources of India. This is illustrated by a declaration made by John Sullivan, a Company’s servant for twenty-nine years and President of the Madras Board of Revenue before a Parliamentary Committee set up in 1848, to investigate the conditions of India, which was then fast deteriorating:

Our system acts very like a sponge; drawing up all the good things from the banks of the Ganges, and squeezing them down upon the banks of the Thames. . . . The demands . . . (on the People) are incessant and facilities for meeting these demands are in a great measure denied to them.⁶²

Evidently, the exploitation of Indian wealth had a dramatic rise following the abolition of slavery in the British West Indies. After wars, pensions, and 10.5 percent dividends had been paid, the Parliamentary Committee found that with revenues of £20,000,000 a year – or £300,000,000 between 1833 and 1847 – plus £16,000,000 in loans, the East Company in India had spent only a little over £100,000 annually, or a total of a million and a half sterling for desperately needed public works in all its territories.⁶³ Evidence further suggests that the Indian taxpayer met all administrative expenses incurred within Britain as well as India.⁶⁴ India’s very large export surplus on a merchandise balance of trade between 1814 and 1858 was also unilaterally transferred to Britain to settle overseas debt and administrative expenses incurred within Britain.⁶⁵ Britain’s foreign debts in the 1780s amounted to about £31million. Under such dire British financial conditions, it is quite plausible that Moghul India’s wealth also went toward the payment in compensation for the emancipation of the enslaved to some of Britain’s most influential citizens and institutions. Among them were William Gladstone’s family, which had received £85,

600 in 1837 in compensation for 2,183 slaves, the Hibberts (of Hibbert Journal of Theology, Religion and Philosophy) got £31,120 for 1,618 slaves, and Joseph Marryat of Lloyd's was awarded £15,000 compensation for 391 slaves in Trinidad and Jamaica.⁶⁶ Historians maintain the argument that sugar did not have sufficiently large total output to be a major contributor to the savings that funded the Industrial Revolution.⁶⁷

The role of Indian cotton in impelling the whole British economy forward into rapid industrial growth is immeasurable. The manufacturing and commercial interests in England, particularly the Manchester Chamber and the Lancashire cotton industries, made India a potential supplier of raw materials and an importer of cheap machine-produced textiles from Britain⁶⁸ – thus ruining Indian industries, particularly the cotton industry of Bengal.⁶⁹ Great Britain's cotton needs were well-secured with the acquisition of Indian territories having the finest cotton tracts by Lord Dalhousie through the application of the Doctrine of Lapse in the 1840s and 1850s. Although American cotton was cheaper and formed an important source for Lancashire industries, its supply was often hindered due to short crops in the 1830s and 1840s.⁷⁰

India, thus, became not only the most important source of cotton, but also a market for British-manufactured cotton goods for about two million people. Manchester's dependence on India became more vital with the outbreak of the Civil War in the United States.

Besides cotton, other important export items from India between 1814 and 1857 were sugar, indigo, piece-goods, raw silk, opium, spices, oil-seeds, jute, and various other miscellaneous goods.⁷¹ While the West Indies sugar plantation economy based on the capital-intensive slave system became unprofitable and burdensome to the imperial government, India, with the vastness of the country and its riches, drew the attention of the political leaders, traders, capitalists, and manufacturers of Britain. Robert P. Thomas views the West Indies plantation colonies as retarding British economic growth because the capital invested in the West Indies could have earned higher returns if invested elsewhere.⁷² While the wealth of Jamaica was £28,040,217, the total wealth of the British possessions in the Caribbean at the time of the American Revolution was £51,926,327.⁷³ As stated earlier, in sharp contrast, with no British investment, £1,000 million was transferred from India to British banks between 1757 and 1815.

Bengal sugar also showed a phenomenal increase from 1836 to 1837 and onwards as a result of the equalization of duties on the East India products with those from the West Indies.⁷⁴ Ironically, some of the leading abolitionists of the West Indian monopoly had interests in the East India

Company which enjoyed monopoly in the India and China trade. Members of the Clapham Sect who advocated the abolition of slavery had East Indian interests. They expressed disappointment at the “unfair discrimination of the sugar duties in favour of the West Indies and against the growing sugar plantations of India.”⁷⁵ Zachary Macaulay, regarded as an abolitionist, had shares in the East India Company. His stance was more against West Indians’ right to claim the continuance of a protecting duty on sugar, which was harmful to the interests of India – that is, the East India Company and to Great Britain – rather than the abolition of slavery.⁷⁶ James Cropper, the greatest importer of East India sugar into Liverpool also advocated the abolition of the West Indian monopoly. His trade of a thousand pounds of sugar a day from India and imported slave-grown cotton from the United States speak of his own interests rather than of the immorality of the institution of slavery. The interests of the entire British Empire, and more particularly of the manufacturing districts, were bound up intricately with those of the Indian position among Her Majesty’s dominions.

British India and the Anglo-Chinese Trade

India was also central to the British trade with China. There was a steady demand for Indian cotton as a basic ingredient of India’s trade with China. Together with opium, it was used to pay for the tea and silk brought to meet the demands of the British consumers.⁷⁷ By 1773, the East India Company established a monopoly on the opium cultivation under the Bengal government which was under company rule since 1757. The rich paddy fields of India became the cultivable lands for the production of opium. Repeated famines occurred in India between 1770 and 1878 because of shortages of crops due to the planting of poppies instead of rice or other grain by the peasants under undue pressure and order from the Company. The Canton trade in the eighteenth century was heavily one-sided in China’s favor.⁷⁸ Foreign traders bought tea, silk, rhubarb and other articles with gold and silver, while the Middle Kingdom - Imperial China – had no need for the Western products. Very often 90 percent - and sometimes as high as 98 percent – of the East India Company’s shipment to China was gold, and only 10 percent commodities.⁷⁹ Reversal in the balance of trade became the dictated policy of the British in the pursuit of its larger interest to open markets and to acquire the rich supplies of raw materials from China, which had made the Middle Kingdom a self-sufficient nation for centuries. The balance in China’s favor slipped the other way from the early 1830s with the dramatic rise in British export of opium to China from India. Opium, which was a banned item of trade by the Chinese gov-

ernment, fetched extraordinary profit in the Company's trade with China. Moreover, opium provided over 9 percent of the Company's revenue in India in 1828 and 1829 and had risen to 12 percent in the 1850s. Following the abolition of the Company's monopoly of the China trade in 1834, the British sold \$18 million worth of Bengal opium in China against the \$17 million worth of Chinese tea and silk, which they bought in 1836.⁸⁰ Without the opium trade, the British would have suffered a severe trade deficit. Opium had become the economic panacea for the British trade doldrums.

Consequent to the abolition of the institution of slavery in the British West Indies, the enslavement of the Chinese began with the Opium War in 1840. Regarded by Chinese Marxist historians "as the epitome of evils of capitalism and imperialism," the resulting events of the Opium War plunged the self-sufficient affluent Chinese Empire into the abyss of European colonialism for a century.⁸¹ Imperial China like India had the natural resources and the consuming market for the British industrial manufacturers. It also had human resources required by the plantations in the British West Indies. The ruining of the two great empires went hand-in-hand for the success of an ever expanding British industrialization. While the former Moghul India Empire became part of the British imperial colonialism, China was reduced to the status of semi-colonialism, characterized by an inefficient, powerless Imperial Chinese government manipulated by the European powers for profit and plunder and a slice of the Chinese melon. The Opium War was a confrontation between two divergent societies – a self-sufficient, agrarian China based on Confucian philosophy, at the core of which were the values of humaneness, loyalty and filial piety; and an expansive, industrial Britain, interested in the profits of trade. While the Chinese concept of their superiority was culturally derived from the Confucian emphasis on the power of example, to the British it was national honor established on the premise of military prowess.

In the aftermath of the Opium War, Imperial China with approximately 430 million people became Britain's largest consuming market. Foreign cotton textiles and other consumer goods poured into China after 1842. The total value of the merchandise imported from Britain in 1842 was about £1 million, and by 1845 it was £2.4 million. By the mid-1840s, the prosperous centers of native textiles in Kiangsu Province lost half of their volume of trade to the influx of cheap manufactured textiles from Britain. The textile factories of Birmingham and Manchester eventually destroyed the Indian textile trade and the Chinese household cotton industries.⁸² Highlighting the importance of British textile to its economy, F.

M. Eden wrote: “The exportation of a piece of British broadcloth is more beneficial to us than the re-exportation of a quantity of Bengal muslin or of West India coffee of equal value.”⁸³ Similarly, woolens were exported to China even when the market was not good but “it was considered a moral obligation.”⁸⁴ As a result of the destruction of the indigenous industries in India and China, there was no local demand for the raw material – that is, cotton and, hence, raw cotton found its way to English textile industries.

The human resources of both India and China had concerns about the acute labor shortages on the plantations following emancipation of the enslaved in 1838. After efforts to recruit indentured laborers from Africa and Europe had failed, planters demanded other labor sources such as China and India. Between 1838 and 1917, approximately half a million East Indians came to the Caribbean. Most of these Indian immigrants were imported to serve in the sugar estates of Guyana and Trinidad. Almost 16 percent, or about 80,000, of them were Muslims. One-third of the East Indian population was female. Although the exact number of immigrants who came to Jamaica between 1845 and 1917 is unclear, evidence suggests that about thirty-seven thousand landed in Jamaica, representing only 8.5 percent of the total indentured East Indians imported into the British West Indies.⁸⁵

With the end of the Opium War, the Port of Amoy in China was the first to witness the participation of foreign nationals in coolie traffic, which caused friction between the Chinese officials and the foreign traders. The coolie trade, spread to other ports that were opened to foreign traders under the Treaty of Nanking in 1842. Prior to the opium trade, Macao was the home for the barbarian Western traders, and Canton, the traditional trading port of Imperial China, and Hong Kong, which became a British colony, saw the migration of the Chinese. Approximately eighteen thousand Chinese were brought to the British West Indies as immigrant laborers between 1838 and 1918. While the majority of the Chinese immigrant laborers, constituting 76 percent of the total, entered Trinidad, while Jamaica received 6.4 percent of the Chinese.⁸⁶

Conclusion

The abolition of the institution of slavery was substituted with the institution of indentureship in Jamaica and in the wider British West Indies. Since economic interest lay at the root of indentureship, the Asian immigrant workers experienced the horrors of plantation life under deceitful contracts. The wealth of Moghul India and of Imperial China was incomprehensible, incalculable, and direct control over the two coun-

tries assured British industrial supremacy and colonial hegemony over the world for centuries to come. From the mid-1850s, the outbreak of almost every rebellion either in India or Imperial China had a direct repercussion in the West Indies or in the Americas at large, for the rebellions were reactions to the British imperial policies in China or India. With the indentured laborers from India and China in the West Indies, Imperial Britain continued the exploitation of human labor while it further enhanced its commercial industrial capitalism throughout Asia and Africa.

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